

March 2004. U.S. Human Rights Violator

Notes from Congress
March 2004

U.S. Human Rights Violator. An international body has made a rare finding that our country is in violation of international law. The offense: denial of D.C. congressional voting rights. The United States is a prominent member of the Organization of American States (OAS) whose respected Human Rights Commission recently declared our country in violation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man. The decision culminates a dogged 11-year case brought by 23 D.C. residents, led by Tim Cooper, a universal human rights activist. This decision comes when U.S. credibility already has been damaged by the invasion of Iraq. Our country, the foremost prosecutor of others for international human rights violations, can little afford this finding. Please call or email your ideas on how we can make maximum use of this important decision in our fight for D.C. voting rights.

Bush Budget Liabilities. We appreciate the administration's continued funding for the D.C. College Access Act and our tax credits and its support of our D.C. Budget Autonomy bill, which the Senate has passed. However, the liabilities for the District and the country in the Bush budget are deep and disturbing. Vouchers for 1,700 children are funded, but 10,430 D.C. public school children won't get funds promised for Title I reading and math and for after-school programs; and dropout prevention programs have been eliminated. Pell grants, work study, and student loan funds are frozen, despite big tuition hikes.

Most D.C. residents were not among the wealthy who got most of the administration's 2003 tax cuts. Most D.C. residents (68%) received less than \$100! Yet the city has lost 700 manufacturing jobs since the President took office.

Crime is increasing again here and throughout the country, but the Bush administration has cut the COPS program by 87%. All told, D.C. has hired 809 additional police and received \$71, 658, 929 from COPS.

D.C. veterans have fought in every American war, and we have lost more men in Iraq than many states. However, 39,248 D.C. veterans will find veterans health programs underfunded and copayments and enrollment fees added to their health care bills.

We have a serious lead water crisis here, but we will lose \$2,409,430 in Clean Water funding and \$2,483,089 from the Community Services Block Grant that funds many services, including emergency services and housing for needy families. The President's new budget and the deficit he has built for future generations can only add to the anger reflected in national polls. That's what elections are for.

Southeast Development Begins. The final award flowing from my Southeast Federal Center (SEFC) bill has been made by GSA to a major developer. Construction on the largest and most valuable site left in D.C. is slated to begin in 2005, bringing mixed uses, including housing, recreation and other amenities along M street and on the Anacostia River. The SEFC marks the first time that federal land has generated revenue for the District or elsewhere because private parties have been authorized to build on a federal site.

I also have negotiated an agreement with GSA requiring that all federal construction and renovation in D.C. use District residents in jobs. This agreement guarantees 20 years of construction jobs for our residents at the SEFC alone, and many more jobs from the private sources that will occupy the site.

Hearing on Lead in Water. At my request, Government Reform Committee Chair Tom Davis (R-VA) will hold a hearing on March 5 on elevated lead levels in our water. I asked for the hearing because two of the three agencies involved are federal: the Environmental Protection Agency, which is supposed to be the watchdog and the Washington Aqueduct, run by the Corps of Engineers, which may be using a new chemical that leeches lead from pipes into our water.

John Hechinger. John Hechinger, who died in January, represented the best of Washington. Appointed first City Council president, John lived his life in the public interest as a business leader, philanthropist and quintessential Washingtonian.

Small Business Workshop. Get commercial loans! Get information on securing government contracts! Monday, March 29th 8am-3pm. Limited Seating. Call 783.5065.

For more information, call my office at 225.8050. Sign up for Norton E-News at www.norton.house.gov.